

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 156311

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 156311

FOLLOWING REPEAT ACTION BANGKOK INFO SECSTATE WASHDC

USSAG NKAHON PHANOM OF 17JUL74:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 9527

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, CB, TH

SUBJECT: RECENT FANK SUCCESSES

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 156311

REF: BANGKOK 11417 (NOTAL)

1. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY REPORT OF RECENT FANK
SUCCESSES, PREPARED BY MISSION'S MILITARY ANALYSTS,

IN RESPONSE TO YOUR REQUEST FOR TALKING POINTS, INCLUDING SPECIFIC FACTS, FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES, ON THIS SUBJECT. ALTHOUGH WE ARE SENDING THIS REPORT AS A CLASSIFIED DOCUMENT, I SEE NO REASON WHY YOU COULD NOT USE ANY OR ALL OF IT IN CONVERSATIONS WITH THAI LEADERS OR OTHERS.

2. (FOR DEPARTMENT: IN REFTEL, AMBASSADOR KINTNER SUGGESTED THAT A REPORT OF THIS KIND MIGHT BE USEFULLY

EMPLOYED IN ASEAN CAPITALS AS BACKGROUND IN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS WHICH WE HOPE WILL SUPPORT GKR AT UNGA THIS FALL. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO REPEAT THIS MESSAGE AS APPROPRIATE.)

39 BEGIN TEXT.

SUBJECT: RECENT FANK SUCCESSES IN CAMBODIA

1. IN APRIL 1974 THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE GKR FROM A MILITARY STANDPOINT APPEARED TO BE GRIM. ALTHOUGH FANK HAD SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED PHNOM PENH AGAINST A MAJOR ENEMY ONSLAUGHT, THE KC'S SHIFT TO A STRATEGY OF ATTACKING THE OUTLYING PROVINCIAL CAPITALS THREATENED TO ENGULF THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. OUDONG AND KOMPONG LUONG HAD ALREADY FALLEN. LOVEK WAS GIVEN ONLY AN EVEN CHANCE FOR SURVIVAL. LOWER ROUTE 4 HAD BEEN SEIZED BY THE KC, AND THE BESIEGED ENCLAVES AT KOMPONG SEILA AND DAS KAN CHOR WERE IN DANGER OF FALLING TO THE ENEMY. REAM AIR BASE AND KOMPONG SOM IN THE SOUTHWEST WERE THREATENED AS WELL. THE SITUATION AT KAMPOT WAS RAPIDLY DETERIORATING. ENEMY ADVANCES ALONG THE BASSAC RIVER ALLOWED KC GUNNERS AGAIN TO SHELL THE CAPITAL, AND MAJOR ENEMY ATTACKS THREATENED THE PROVINCIAL CAPITALS OF PREY VENG AND KOMPONG THOM.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 156311

2. BEGINNING IN THE MIDDLE OF MAY, HOWEVER, THE SITUATION HAS STEADILY IMPROVED FOR THE GKR'S FORCES, EXCEPT FOR A FEW MINOR SETBACKS. THE GKR HAS EXPANDED GOVERNMENT CONTROL AROUND PHNOM PENH NORTH TO LOVEK AND IN THE BASSAC REGION TO THE SOUTH. FANK INITIATIVES HAVE ALSO EXPANDED GOVERNMENT CONTROL AROUND KAMPOT AND PREY VENG. THE VITAL MEKONG RIVER LIFELINE HAS BEEN KEPT OPEN FROM THE SOUTH VIET-NAM BORDER ALL THE WAY TO KOMPONG CHAM, AND THE TONLE SAP RIVER REMAINS OPEN BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND KOMPONG CHHNANG. THE KHMER AIR FORCE HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS ABILITY TO PROVIDE EVER-INCREASING SUPPORT TO GROUND AND RIVERINE OPERATIONS, AND AIR-GROUND COORDINATION HAS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY. THE FANK RECRUITMENT EFFORT HAS ALSO DEMONSTRATED

ITS CAPABILITY OF PRODUCING REPLACEMENTS WHICH SUBSTANTIALLY OFFSET BATTLE LOSSES. BY THE MIDDLE OF JULY. FANK HAD CLEARLY SEIZED THE INITIATIVE FROM THE ENEMY AND WAS ON THE OFFENSIVE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE ENEMY IS NOW REACTING TO FANK INITIATIVES, RATHER THAN VICE VERSA.

3. SOME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF RECENT FANK SUCCESSES AND IMPROVEMENTS WHICH SUPPORT THE ABOVE ANALYSIS ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW:

(A) ROUTE 5. ON MAY 25 FORCES OF THE 7TH DIVISION AND 5TH BRIGADE BROKE THROUGH A WEAKENED ENEMY FORCE ALONG ROUTE 5 AND ADVANCED OVER 2 1/2 KILOMETERS TO THE NORTH. AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME THE SITUATION AT LOVEK BEGAN TO IMPROVE AND WAS STABILIZED SO THAT BY JUNE 24 THE LOVEK HARBOR ON THE TONLE SAP WAS SECURED. THIS PERMITTED THE KHMER NAVY TO EVACUATE NEARLY 10,000 CIVILIANS SUCCESSFULLY TO KOMPONG CHHNANG. DURING THE MONTH OF JUNE FANK REINFORCEMENTS ALONG ROUTE 5 ENABLED GOVERNMENT TROOPS TO BREAK THROUGH ENEMY LINES AND SUCCESSFULLY LINUP WITH FORCES ATTACKING SOUTH FROM LOVEK IN THE HISTORICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY IMPORTANT CITY OF OUDING, THE FORMER RELIGIOUS CAPITAL, ON JULY 9. THE SPECIFIC RESULTS OF FANK OPERATIONS ALONG ROUTE 5 DURING THE PERIOD APRIL 22 TO JULY 9 WERE AS FOLLOWS:

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 156311

GKR LOSSES: 104 KILLED
786 WOUNDED
GKR MATERIEL LOSSES: 2 PRC RADIOS
4 M16 RIFLES
1 JEEP
3 M113 APCs
2 KHMER NAVY VESSELS(DAMAGED)
ENEMY LOSSES: 1366 KILLED
45 CAPTURED
3 SURRENDERED
(THE COMMANDER OF THE R 114
BATTALION AND 2 OF HIS LIEUTENANTS)
Z 18 RALLIERS
KC MATERIEL CAPTURED: 104 CREW-SERVED WEAPONS
308 INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS

(B) BASSAC AREA SOUTHEAST OF PHNOM PENH. AT THE BEGINNING OF JUNE A JOINT OPERATION BY THE 1ST AND 2ND DIVISIONS ALONG THE ROBAOH ANG KANK TRAIL BETWEEN ROUTE 1 AND THE BASSAC RIVER WAS SUCCESSFUL IN ELIMINATING THE ENEMY FORCE IN THIS AREA. ON JUNE 8 OVER 200 ENEMY WERE KILLED AS FANK INFANTRY

AND ARMORED VEHICLES OVERRAN ENEMY DEFENSES AND RE-OPENED THE TRAIL. ON JULY 6 THE 1ST AND 2ND DIVISIONS LAUNCHED AN OPERATION SOUTHEAST OF TAKMAU AND BY JULY 12 THEY HAD PUSHED THE ENEMY BACK OVER THREE KILOMETERS AND HAD REOCCUPIED KOH KRABEI AND SVAY ROLUM, TWO KEY POINTS ALONG THE BASSAC RIVER THAT HAD BEEN LOST IN MAY. ENEMY LOSSES IN THIS OPERATION WERE REPORTED AS 144 KILLED, 9 CAPTURED AND OVER 30 WEAPONS CAPTURED. FANK LOSSES WERE 13 KILLED AND 77 WOUNDED. IN ADDITION, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HOSTILITIES BEGAN IN 1970, FANK FORCES OCCUPIED TUOL KRASANG, AND THEY REMAIN IN CONTROL OF THIS TOWN.

(C) ROUTE 4/DAS KAN CHOR. ON JUNE 6 THE 13TH AND 27TH BRIGADES LAUNCHED AN OPERATION FROM KOMPONG SPEU WEST ALONG ROUTE 4. AFTER A SLOW START
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 156311

THEY SUCCEEDED IN LINKING UP WITH THE BESIEGED GARRISON AT DAS KAN CHOR ON JUNE 25, THUS REOPENING ALL OF ROUTE 4 BETWEEN KOMPONG SPEU AND DAS KAN CHOR. FRIENDLY LOSSES IN THIS OPERATION WERE 8 KILLED AND 32 WOUNDED, WHILE THE ENEMY SUFFERED 66 KILLED AND LOST OVER 60 WEAPONS. SUBSEQUENT TO THE LINK-UP, THE ONLY SERIOUS ENEMY ATTEMPT TO INTERDICT ROUTE 4 BETWEEN THESE TWO TOWNS WAS BLOCKED BY A FANK COUNTERATTACK ON JULY 4 WHICH WAS SUPPORTED BY KHMER AIR FORCE GUNSHIPS. ENEMY LOSSES IN THIS SINGLE ACTION WERE 60 KILLED AND 10 CREW-SERVED AND 16 INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS CAPTURED. ACTIVE FANK PATROLLING AND COUNTERATTACKS ALONG ROUTE 4 SURPRISED ENEMY FORCES ON JULY 10 AND 12, RESULTING IN 40 ENEMY KILLED AND 28 WEAPONS CAPTURED. MOREOVER, AS OF JULY 15, FANK WAS ATTACKING WEST OF DAS KAN CHOR AND HAD ADVANCED OVER THREE KILOMETERS ALONG ROUTE 4 TOWARD KOMPONG SEILA. THE REOPENING OF ROUTE 4 TO DAS KAN CHOR BY FANK HAD THE ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANT RESULT THAT A MAJOR KC NORTH-SOUTH SUPPLY ROUTE THROUGH TRAPEANG KRALOENG WAS CUT, THUS DOUBLING THE DISTANCE THAT KC SUPPLIES AND REINFORCEMENTS MUST NOW TRAVEL BETWEEN THE BATTLEFIELDS SOUTHEAST AND NORTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH.

(D) PREY VENG. ON MAY 1 THE KC LAUNCHED A MULTI-REGIMENT ATTACK AGAINST THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF PREY VENG TO THE EAST OF PHNOM PENH. THE WELL-PREPARED DEFENDERS NOT ONLY WITHSTOOD THE HEAVY ENEMY ATTACKS FOR TWO MONTHS WITHOUT THE LOSS OF ANY TERRITORY, BUT DURING THE PERIOD JULY 10-14 THEY LAUNCHED A COUNTER-ATTACK TO THE NORTH AND NORTHEAST OF PREY VENG THAT SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED THE PERIMETER. THIS OPERATION ALSO ILLUSTRATED THE IMPROVEMENT IN AIR-GROUND COORDINATION, AS MORE THAN 40 T-28 SORTIES IN ONE DAY ASSISTED

FANK TO BREAK THROUGH THE ENEMY DEFENSIVE POSITIONS. THE KC LOST 65 KILLED AND MORE THAN 30 WEAPONS CAPTURED, WHILE FANK LOSSES WERE LIMITED TO 7 KILLED AND 33 WOUNDED. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THIS INITIATIVE BY FANK FORCES HAD DELAYED AND PERHAPS SERIOUSLY DISRUPTED ENEMY PLANS TO CONTINUE ATTACKING PREY VENG.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 06 STATE 156311

(E) LOWER MEKONG RIVER. SUPPLY CONVOYS HAVE

BEEN REACHING PHNOM PENH REGULARLY, ON APPROXIMATELY A WEEKLY BASIS, WITH MINIMAL DAMAGE AND NO SERIOUS INTERFERENCES. DURING THE PERIOD JULY 4-6 GOVERNMENT FORCES LAUNCHED AN OPERATION THAT PENETRATED MORE THAN 10 KILOMETERS INTO ENEMY-HELD TERRITORY WEST OF NEAK LUONG. THEY SUCCESSFULLY RETURNED TO GKR CONTROL MORE THAN 15,000 REFUGEES WHO HAD BEEN FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM THEIR HOME TERRITORY ALONG THE BANKS OF THE MEKONG BY THE R A YEAR OR MORE AGO. THIS BOLD MOVE CAUGHT THE KC BY SURPRISE, AS FANK FORCES HIT UNPREPARED KC UNITS, KILLING 21 AND CAPTURING 5 PRISONERS AND 13 WEAPONS. FANK LOSSES IN THIS OPERATION WERE 5 KILLED, 3 MISSING AND 5 WOUNDED.

(F) KOMPONG THOM. AT THE BEGINNING OF MAY THE KR MASSED OVER 15 BATTALIONS FOR A MAJOR ATTACK AGAINST KOMPONG THOM. THE KC WERE REACTING TO FANK INITIATIVES THAT HAD BROUGHT INTO KOMPONG THOM MORE THAN 40,000 REFUGEES FROM KC-CONTROLLED AREAS DURING JANUARY AND FEBRUARY OF 1974. THE ENEMY'S MAY OFFENSIVE IN THIS AREA NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND, AS FANK COUNTER-ATTACKS BLOCKED AND THOROUGHLY DISRUPTED THE ENEMY ATTACKS BEFORE THEY COULD REACH THE MAIN FANK POSITIONS. BY THE END OF MAY, THE ENEMY THREAT TO KOMPONG THOM HAD SIGNIFICANTLY DIMINISHED AND FANK FORCES WERE ONCE AGAIN ON THE OFFENSIVE. ENEMY LOSSES AROUND KOMPONG THOM HAVE BEEN CONSERVATIVELY ESTIMATED AT OVER 300 KILLED.

(G) KAMPOT. THROUGHOUT JUNE AND THE FIRST PART OF JULY THE SITUATION AT KAMPOT STEADILY IMPROVED, SO THAT FORCES COULD BE WITHDRAWN IN ORDER TO REINFORCE OTHER AREAS. FANK FORCES AT KAMPOT WENT ON THE OFFENSIVE AND EXPANDED THE PERIMETER TO THE WEST AND NORTHEAST OF THE TOWN. FANK CASUALTIES WERE LIGHT WHILE OVER 50 OF THE ENEMY WERE KILLED. AS OF JULY 15 ENEMY RESISTANCE TO FANK ADVANCES AROUND KAMPOT HAD HARDENED, BUT IN GENERAL THE SITUATION AT KAMPOT REMAINS GOOD. THE KC SUFFERED A MAJOR DEFEAT IN FAILING TO TAKE THE CITY

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 07 STATE 156311

AFTER AN ALL-OUT EFFORT IN APRIL AND MAY.

(H) KHMER AIR FORCE. THE U.S. BOMBING EFFORT ENDED ON AUGUST 15, 1973, LEAVING THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR AIR OPERATIONS IN THE HANDS OF THE KHMER AIR FORCE (KAF). AFTER NEARLY A YEAR OF GROWING PAINS, KAF SHOWS DEFINITE SIGNS OF COMING OF AGE. FOR EXAMPLE DURING THE MONTH OF JUNE TACTICAL AIR OPERATIONS ACHIEVED A RECORD HIGH OF OVER 3,600 SORTIES, AVERAGING OVER 122 SORTIES PER DAY. THE KAF COMMANDER'S OBJECTIVE OF 120-130 TACTICAL SORTIES PER DAY WAS THUS ACHIEVED. T-28 STRIKE SORTIES REACHED THE UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF 2,329 DURING THE MONTH OF JUNE. INDICATIONS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY ARE THAT THESE FIGURES WILL BE SURPASSED. THESE TACTICAL AIR EFFORTS HAVE MADE A DIRECT AND SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO RECENT BATTLEFIELD SUCCESSES OF FANK, FOR EXAMPLE AT LOVEK, ALONG ROUTE 5, AND IN THE RETAKING OF OUDONG AND KOMPONG LUONG. OTHER SUCCESSES, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA NORTH OF PHNOM PENH, ARE THE RESULT OF THE CONTINUING BUILD-UP OF KAF RESOURCES, ITS MAINTENANCE CAPABILITY, AND THE CONFIDENCE INSPIRED IN GROUND COMMANDERS AS A RESULT OF KAF'S PERFORMANCE. THE RECENT DISPLAY OF COORDINATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN GROUND AND AIR COMMANDERS WAS UNKNOWN ONE YEAR AGO. FAC-DIRECTED AIR STRIKES ARE BECOMING MORE NUMEROUS, AS IS THE USE OF FAC'S IN DIRECTING ARTILLERY. INCREASINGLY, THE AU-24 AND UH1G GUNSHIPS HAVE BEEN USED IN CLOSE SUPPORT ROLES, JOINING THE AC-47 GUNSHIPS IN NIGHT MISSIONS IN SUPPORT OF TROOPS IN CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY. EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT HAS BEEN THE TRANSPORT AND UH1H HELICOPTER CONTRIBUTION TO RECENT BATTLEFIELD SUCCESSES. FOR EXAMPLE, DURING THE MONTH OF JUNE KAF C-123 SORTIES REACHED A NEW HIGH OF 551, AVERAGING MORE THAN 18 PER DAY. AIR DROP CAPABILITY HAS ALSO BEEN OUTSTANDING, PARTICULARLY IN SUCH SMALL ENCLAVES AS KOMPONG SEILA, WHERE THE DROP ZONE IS TINY, THE WEATHER MARGINAL AND THE ENEMY IN CLOSE PROXIMITY. THE SURVIVAL OF ENCLAVES SUCH AS THESE HAS BEEN TO A LARGE DEGREE DEPENDENT ON THE SUCCESS OF AIR DROPS OF AMMUNITION, FOOD, AND OTHER SUPPLIES.

(I) KHMER NAVY. THE KHMER NAVY (MNK) HAS
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 08 STATE 156311

RECENTLY GIVEN A CONTINUING DEMONSTRATION ON ITS CAPABILITY TO KEEP THE MEKONG AND TONLE SAP RIVERS OPEN TO VITAL RIVER TRAFFIC, BOTH FOR RESUPPLY OF PHNOM PENH, KOMPONG CHAM AND KOMPONG CHHNANG, AND IN SUPPORT OF GROUND OPERATIONS. THE RECENT ARRIVAL IN PHNOM PENH OF A 79-CRAFT CONVOY ESCORTED BY MNK AND CARRYING MORE THAN 5,000 TONS OF FOODSTUFFS FROM

KOMPONG CHHNANG SHOULD HAVE A MARKED EFFECT IN
STABILIZING PRICES OF LOCAL PRODUCE IN THE CAPITAL'S
MARKETS.
DEAN UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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